

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3007
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY ROME
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AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AAMCONSUL LYON
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 18521

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PERP, PINTN XA, FR
SUBJECT: FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE -- A FOCUS ON AFRICA

SUMMARY. GAULLIST OPPOSITION TO GISCARD'S AFRICAN
POLICY IS ON THE RISE. GOF FOREIGN POLICY, PARTICULARLY
IN AFRICA, WAS THE FOCAL POINT OF A PRESS CONFERENCE
JUNE 8 BY RPR LEADER JACQUES CHIRAC AND A DEBATE THE
SAME DAY IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. IN BOTH THE PRESS
CONFERENCE AND IN THE ASSEMBLY, THE RPR HARDENED ITS
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TONE, CRITICIZING THE GOF FOR SEEKING MILITARY SOLUTIONS
TO POLITICAL PROBLEMS, FOR SLIDING BACK INTO NATO
THROUGH COMBINED EFFORTS IN AFRICA, AND FOR RUNNING HERE
AND THERE PROTECTING OTHER PEOPLE'S INTERESTS WHILE
JEOPARDIZING THOSE OF FRANCE. THIS SNIPING BY PART OF
GISCARD'S OWN PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY ILLUSTRATES THE
DOMESTIC FRAGILITY OF GISCARD'S AFRICAN POLICY. THE

MOST VULNERABLE PRESSURE POINT FOR DOMESTIC CRITICISM IS, IN OUR VIEW, CHAD. END SUMMARY.

1. THREE THEMES: GOF FOREIGN POLICY -- PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA -- CAME UNDER HEAVY CRITICISM FROM THE GAULISTS DURING A PRESS CONFERENCE BY RPR PRESIDENT JACQUES CHIRAC AND IN THE ASSEMBLY DEBATE BY RPR SPOKESMAN MAURICE COUVE DE MURVILLE. THROUGHOUT THEIR REMARKS ON THREE THEMES: (A) AFRICAN PROBLEMS CANNOT BE SOLVED BY FORCE; (B) THE GOF PROPENSITY TO "ATLANTICIZE" ITS AFRICAN POLICY IS A CHANGE IN FRENCH POLICY WITH WHICH THEY DO NOT AGREE, AND IS USELESSLY RESULTING IN A GRAVE DETERIORATION OF FRANCE'S RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES OF IMPORTANCE TO HER -- THE USSR, ALGERIA, LIBYA;

(C) GOF INTERVENTIONS BY FORCE NOT ONLY DO NOT RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE COUNTRIES, THEY DIMINISH FRANCE'S INTERNATIONAL POSITION AND HER ABILITY TO MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE SETTLEMENT OF THESE PROBLEMS. IN ADDITION, THEY DAMAGE FRANCE'S HISTORICAL EFFORT TO MAINTAIN A CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE THIRD WORLD.

2. ZAIRE: GIVEN THE SUCCESS AND HUMANITARIAN APPEAL OF THE SHABA RESCUE OPERATION (AS WELL AS THE TIMELY RETURN OF THE MAJORITY OF LEGIONNAIRES PRIOR TO THE AS-

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SEMBLY DEBATE), THE RPR EXPRESSED ITS SUPPORT FOR THE GOF'S DECISION TO INTERVENE. IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, CHIRAC COMMENTED THAT THE OPERATION WAS REMARKABLY WELL EXECUTED TECHNICALLY. IN THE ASSEMBLY DEBATE, RPR SPOKESMAN COUVE DE MURVILLE (PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLY'S COMMISSION ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS) ALSO EXPRESSED THE RPR'S SUPPORT FOR THE HUMANITARIAN OPERATION, BUT WENT ON TO WARN THE GOVERNMENT AGAINST BECOMING OVERLY INVOLVED IN THE FUTURE OF ZAIRE AND RECALLED THAT THE FRANCO-ZAIRIAN AGREEMENT ON MILITARY COOPERATION SIGNED IN 1974 HAD NEVER BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE ASSEMBLY NOR PUBLICIZED. IN ADDITION TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS THIS POSES -- GOF ACTION WITHOUT LEGAL BASIS AND DEROGATION OF PARLIAMENTARY POWER -- THE APPARENT WILLINGNESS OF THE GOF TO INTERVENE IN AFRICAN AFFAIRS COULD BRING INTO QUESTION FRANCE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH AFRICAN AND OTHER THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES.

3. CHAD AND WESTERN SAHARA: THE FRENCH ROLE IN CHAD AND WESTERN SAHARA WAS RUDELY QUESTIONED. CHIRAC CRITICIZED THE GOF'S INTERVENTION IN BOTH COUNTRIES AS AN EFFORT TO PROVIDE A MILITARY SOLUTION TO A POLITICAL

PROBLEM WHICH IS NOT RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF EACH SITUATION AND WHICH LESSENS THE POSSIBILITY FOR AN EFFECTIVE POLITICAL/DIPLOMATIC SETTLEMENT. GOF PARTICIPATION IN A SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION OF THE WESTERN SAHARAN PROBLEM WOULD BE DEPENDENT ON ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ALGERIA, A RELATIONSHIP WHICH IS SUFFERING UNDER PRESENT

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POLICY. RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM IN CHAD DEPENDED ON LIBYA AND FRANCE WOULD BE BETTER ADVISED TO STRENGTHEN ITS RELATIONS THERE AS A MEANS TO PROVIDING PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE AREA. DURING THE ASSEMBLY DEBATE, COUVE DE MURVILLE SUPPORTED CHIRAC'S THESIS STATING THAT IN NEITHER CASE WOULD A SOLUTION BE FOUND THROUGH MILITARY ACTION. HE DEMANDED AN EXPLANATION OF GOF POLICY AND

DEPLORED THE ASSEMBLY'S IGNORANCE OF GOF ACTIVITY.

4. FRANCE AND THE SUPER POWERS: IN THEIR RESPECTIVE
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PRESENTATIONS, BOTH CHIRAC AND COUVE DE MURVILLE ATTACKED WHAT THEY PERCEIVE TO BE GOF'S TENDENCY TO PLACE ITS FOREIGN POLICY, PARTICULARLY AFRICAN, IN AN "ATLANTIC" CONTEXT. BASING HIS COMMENTS ON THE ESCALATING POLEMICS BETWEEN THE US AND THE USSR INVOLVING AFRICA, ON THE RECENT PARIS CONFERENCE INVOLVING THE US AND NATO ALLIES, AND ON AMERICAN SUPPORT OF FRENCH ACTION IN OPPOSITION TO A COMMUNIST SUPPORTED INVASION, CHIRAC OBJECTED TO THE GOF POLICY OF PUTTING ITSELF UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE AMERICANS IN AFRICA. IN CHIRAC'S OPINION, NEITHER THE AMERICANS NOR THE SOVIETS HAVE ANY BUSINESS IN AFRICA AND COULD, AT THE LIMIT, PROVOKE A "VIETNAMIZATION OF AFRICA." COUVE DE MURVILLE PICKED UP THE THEME IN HIS COMMENTS CONCERNING THE NEED FOR THE POLITICAL/DIPLOMATIC RESOLUTION OF AFRICAN PROBLEMS WHICH COULD NOT BE SOLVED BY FORCE -- EITHER AMERICAN OR SOVIET.

5. THE SOCIALISTS: ECHOING IN MANY WAYS THE CRITICISMS OF COUVE DE MURVILLE, SOCIALIST LEADER FRANCOIS MITTERRAND DELIVERED A WELL-ARGUED AND HARSH CONDEMNATION OF FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY IN AFRICA, CALLING FRENCH MILITARY INTERVENTION IN ZAIRE AND CHAD BEYOND THE SCOPE OF EXISTING AGREEMENTS ON TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. ATTACKING A NUMBER OF ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS AND AMBIGUITIES IN GOF POLICY, MITTERRAND POSED NUMEROUS RHETORICAL QUESTIONS ALONG THE LINES OF "WHOM ARE WE FIGHTING WITH AND WHOM ARE WE FIGHTING AGAINST?: IN SO DOING (AND WITH THE SHABA EXPERIENCE FRESH IN HIS MEMORY WHERE HE WAS CAUGHT CRITICIZING WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE A LIFE-SAVING OPERATION), HE EFFECTIVELY CLOAKED PS CRITICISM BEHIND A DEFENSE OF "INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION", THUS PROTECTING HIMSELF FROM FUTURE GOF RE-
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VELATIONS WHICH MIGHT PROVE EMBARRASSING. SUCH WAS THE CASE, FOR EXAMPLE, IN MITTERRAND'S SEVERAL DISBELIEVING REFERENCES TO CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA WHERE HE MADE THE MOST OF THE CURRENT LACK OF HARD EVIDENCE, WHILE WISELY REFUSING TO CATEGORICALLY DENY A CUBAN ROLE.

6. THE COMMUNISTS: TOTALLY HOSTIEL AS USUAL, GEORGES MARCHAIS DEVOTED NEARLY HIS WHOLE SPEECH TO AFRICA WHERE HE ACCUSED THE GOF "OF FOLLOWING IN THE WORST TRADITION OF PAST COLONIAL WARS." HE WAS CRITICAL (AS WERE MITTERRAND AND COUVE DE MURVILLE) OF THE ATLANTIC, NATO CONTEXT IN WHICH THE ZAIRE OPERATION APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN EXECUTED, CALLING FRANCE "THE POLICEMAN OF AFRICA ON BEHALF OF NATO." AGAIN JOINING WITH A MITTERRAND THEME, MARCHAIS CRITICIZED FRANCE FOR USING ITS ARMED MIGHT TO SUPPORT "DISCREDITED MEN WHO ARE CONTESTED BY POPULAR OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS."

7. COMMENT/ BARRING A MAJOR CHANGE IN AFRICAN POLICY, WHICH SEEMS UNLIKELY OVER THE SHORT TERM, THE GOF IS

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GOING TO HAVE TO LIVE WITH ATTACKS NOT ONLY FROM THE
OPPOSITION BUT FROM MEMBERS OF ITS OWN PARLIAMENTARY
MAJORITY. IF AS THE FRENCH HOPE, THE MAURITANIANS ARE
ABLE INCREASINGLY TO LOOK AFTER THEMSELVES WITH MOROCCAN
HELP, THE WESTERN SAHARA MAY RECEDE AS A POINT OF CON-
TROVERSY. SIMILARLY WITH THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE
ZAIRE PROBLEM THE GOF MAY BECOME LESS VISIBLE AND LESS
VULNERABLE THERE. IT IS IN CHAD (WHERE CURIOUSLY
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FRENCH INVOLVEMENT WENT ALMOST UNNOTICED IN FRANCE UNTIL
VERY RECENTLY) THAT THE GOF WILL PROBABLY REMAIN EXPOSED
TO DOMESTIC CRITICISM AS LONG AS FRENCH FORCES REMAIN
INVOLVED IN A DIRECT WAY. THE GOF HAS, MOREOVER, BEEN
LESS THAN COMPLETELY CANDID ON THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF
THIS INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS. HAD THE BATTLE AT
ATI AND THE LOSS OF THE JAGUAR THERE NOT COINCIDED WITHH
THE SHABA EVENTS, GOF CHAD POLICY MIGHT ALREADY BE
COMING IN FOR SHARPER AND MORE SPECIFIC CRITICISM. IN
SUM, WE THINK THAT THE MALLOUM GOVERNMENT WOULD
BE MAKING A MISTAKE TO COUNT ON FRENCH FORCES REMAINING
IN THE COUNTRY INDEFINITELY TO DO CHAD'S FIGHTING.
THE FRENCH HAVE LONG RECOGNIZED THAT THE ONLY OUT IS
A POLITICAL SOLUTION AND WE THINK THE POINT MAY BE
APPROACHING WHERE THE GOC WILL FIND ITSELF
PRESSURED BY FRANCE TO AGREE TO POLITICAL COMPROMISES
LESS THAN IDEAL FROM ITS POINT OF VIEW.
HARTMAN

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